CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

Please amend Claims 1 and 6 of the application, as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An exposure deciding method for deciding laser exposure when image formation is performed by an electrophotographic process, comprising:

an expansion step of expanding image data at a resolution higher than ~~an actual~~ a resolution performance capability of an output apparatus;

a resolution conversion step of subjecting high-resolution data, which is the result of expansion [[at]] in said expansion step, to a resolution conversion to the ~~actual~~ resolution higher than the resolution performance capability of the output apparatus, by a prescribed low-resolution conversion method; and

an image formation step of forming an image represented by image data, which has undergone the resolution conversion performed [[at]] in said resolution conversion step, based upon [[the]] a said laser exposure set in such a manner that a density of image data will be the same before and after the resolution conversion performed by the prescribed low-resolution conversion.

2. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said resolution conversion step includes averaging the high-resolution data using a matrix of a predetermined size and subjecting the actual resolution of the output apparatus to a resolution conversion.

3. (Original) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said resolution conversion step includes averaging the high-resolution data using a matrix in which boxes of a matrix of a predetermined size have been shifted by one-half pixel.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that will take on a different image formation state by the prescribed low-resolution conversion method despite the fact that an original image pattern is the same, the density of the prescribed pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined in such a manner that the density of the prescribed pattern will be the same before and after image formation.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that is repeated at fixed intervals, the density of the prescribed pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined based upon the measured density in such a manner that a difference in average density will not develop between the prescribed patterns.

6. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus for deciding laser exposure when image formation is performed by an electrophotographic process, comprising:

an expansion unit adapted to expand image data at a resolution higher than ~~an actual~~ a resolution performance capability of an output apparatus;

a resolution conversion unit adapted to subject high-resolution data, which is the result of expansion by said expansion unit to a resolution conversion to the ~~actual~~ resolution higher than the resolution performance capability of the output apparatus, by a prescribed low-resolution conversion method; and

an image formation unit adapted to form an image represented by image data, which has undergone the resolution conversion performed by said resolution conversion unit, based upon [[the]] a laser exposure set in such a manner that a density of image data will be the same before and after the resolution conversion performed by the prescribed low-resolution conversion.

7.-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said resolution conversion unit averages the high-resolution data using a matrix of a predetermined size and subjects the actual resolution of the output apparatus to a resolution conversion.

10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said resolution conversion unit averages the high-resolution data using a matrix in which boxes of a matrix of a predetermined size have been shifted by one-half pixel.

11. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that will take on a different image formation state by the prescribed low-resolution conversion method despite the fact that an original image pattern is the same, the density of the prescribed pattern formed is measured, and the laser exposure is determined in such a manner that the density of the prescribed pattern will be the same before and after image formation.

12. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein a prescribed pattern is formed that is repeated at fixed intervals, the density of the prescribed

pattern is measured, and the laser exposure is determined based on the measured density in such a manner that a difference in average density will not develop between the prescribed patterns.